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Socio-economic status of tribal farmers of Melghat region in Maharashtra

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Abstract

An attempt has been made in the present investigation to study the socio-economic status of tribal farmers of Melghat region in Maharashtra. The study area was Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil of Amravati district were purposively selected for the study because the highest concentration of tribal population. The data were collected through personal interview from tribal farmers with the help of pre tested interview schedule. A total sample of 200 tribal farmers was selected randomly from 10 villages of two tehsil during 2020-2021. The study revealed that out of 200 selected tribal families 140 (70.00%) families observed as joint family from that 77 (77.00%) families were from Chikhaldara tehsil and 63 (63.00%) were from Dharani tehsil because among the tribal communities, traditional values and social ethics plays an important role. Among selected tribal 133 (66.50%) families belonged to the medium family size. Overall illiteracy percentage was 29.00 percent and education up to primary level, low capital investment in productive asset was seen amongst the tribal families. Tribal farmer had average land holding of 1.82 ha with cropping intensity of 180.00 percent. The cropping pattern was predominant with food grain crops indicating subsistent agriculture. Each farmer possessed with average of 1 goat and 2 bullocks. Overall average age of marriage was 19.37 years. This showed that tribals get married at early age.

Keywords: Tribal farmers, socio-economic status, agriculture, education, livestock, age of marriage

Introduction

Tribe is a group of families or communities linked by social, economic, religion or blood ties and usually having a common culture and a recognised leader. Out of more than 500 tribal groups in India which can exist at various stages of socio-economic and educational development, it is estimated that there are around 75 Primitive Tribal Groups in India who can have a level of technological ability of the pre-agricultural level, low literacy, economically backward, and a stagnant or declining population.

According to the census of 2011, the Scheduled Tribe population in India was 104.5 million, accounting 8.63 percent of the total population of the country the tribal population. In Maharashtra in the year 2011 was 10.50 million, which constitutes 9.35 percent of the total population of the state. Maharashtra has the second largest tribal population in the country, next only to Madhya Pradesh, accounting for 10 percent of the total Scheduled Tribe population of India. The tribal population in Amravati district in the year 2011 was 404,000 which constitute 13.98 percent of the total population of the district.

In the following decade, Melghat drew a lot of attention from the media as well as NGOs, activists, researchers, medical practitioners, and committees set up by courts to tackle malnutrition and child deaths in this region. The tribal groups in the region, especially the Korkus, are the typical examples of deprivation and poverty. Although the practices

and way of living are still traditional, shifts in the domain of livelihood and economic activity are prevalent among the Korkus. This change in the key domain is the result of their access to forest and forest resources, though the community has a long tradition of attachment with the forest. The backwardness in the spheres of socioeconomic and development domains is evident among the Korkus. The Melghat region, where Korkus form a majority, is famous for the higher rate of malnutrition and child mortality.

Agriculture has become a major form of activity among the Korkus. There is some proportion of the people who own agricultural land, while most of them are agricultural laborers. The wages for agricultural laborers are not promising. Hence, for many families, the source of income and food comes from forest products. The major products they collect from forest include herbs like Tendupatta-Hirda, Sal, Mahua, bamboo and honey. The resources collected from the forest have a limited market, and they often have to sell it for minimum price due to the issue of access. Many villages are not even connected by road. Therefore, the present study was undertaken to study the socio-economic status of tribal farmers of Melghat region.

Materials and Methods

The present study was undertaken in Melghat region of Amravati district as the melghat is major tract of tribal population. Two tehsils of Amravati district namely

Chikhaldara and Dharani were purposively selected for the study because the highest concentration of tribal population. Five villages from each of the two tehsils were selected by following simple random sampling method, thus making total of ten villages. From each of the selected village 20 tribal farmers were selected by following random sampling procedure, thus making a total of 200 respondents. The simple tabular analysis was carried out to achieve the objective.

The present investigation was based on the primary data. The data on various aspects of the study were collected from personal interviewed with the help of specially designed scheduled. The data pertains to the year 2020-21. The data were analyse according to various aspect i.e. family size and it's composition, land utilization, education pattern, cropping pattern, livestock position, Fixed capital

investment, age of marriage, etc. The data collected were analysed by taking in to account the objectives of the study. The simple tabular analysis was carried out to achieve the objective.

Results and Discussion

Socio-economic status of the tribal farmers were studied with the help of type of family, size of family, educational status, land utilization, cropping pattern etc. are discussed in the following paragraph.

Family type of selected tribals

Type of family gives the idea about that whether tribals people live together with their parents or separate out from them after marriage. Regarding type of family, the tribals selected are presented in the Table 1.

Table 1: Family type of selected tribals

Sr. No.	Particulars	Tehsils (No.)		
		Chikhaldara	Dharani	Total
1	Nuclear Family	23 (23.00)	37 (37.00)	60 (30.00)
2	Joint Family (Above 4)	77 (77.00)	63 (63.00)	140 (70.00)
	Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentages to total)

Table 1 revealed that the family type of selected tribal were categorized into two i.e. nuclear and joint family. Out of 200 selected families 140 (70.00%) families observed as joint family from that 77 (77.00%) families were from Chikhaldara tehsil and 63 families (63.00%) were from Dharani tehsil. As regards nuclear type families, 23 (23.00%) families from Chikhaldara and 37 (37.00%) families from Dharani were of nuclear type. In total 60 (30.00%) families were nuclear type.

Family size of selected tribals

Family size are basically the functions of economic and social characteristics, custom and religious belief of society. The family size of tribals plays important role in managing the various farm activity. Family members work as a farm labour as and when required. In view of this, family size of the selected tribals was studied to know the labour force at his hand. The details of average family size of selected tribals are presented in Table 2.

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Table 2: Average family size of selected tribals

Sr. No.	Particulars	Chikhaldara	Dharani	Total
1	Small	23 (23.00)	37 (37.00)	60 (30.00)
2	Medium (5-10)	71 (71.00)	62 (62.00)	133 (66.50)
3	Large (Above 10)	6 (6.00)	1 (1.00)	7 (3.50)
	Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentages to total)

It is observed from Table 2 that 71 (71.00%) families from the Chikhaldara tehsil, 62 (62.00%) families from Dharani tehsil, thus in total 133 (66.50%) families belonged to the medium family size. It is also observed that total 60 families (30.00%) belonged to the small family size. From 60 families, 23 (23.00%) families were from Chikhaldara tehsil and 37 (37.00%) families are from Dharani tehsil. Total 7 families 6 (6.00 percent) families from Chikhaldara tehsil and only 1 (1.00%) family from Dharani tehsil belonged to the large family size.

Educational status of selected tribals

Education is an important factor in understanding importance and availability of technology and its adoption. It is also one of the important aspect which affect the standard of living of families. The information regarding the education status of selected tribal is presented in Table 3

Table 3: Educational status of selected tribals

(N=200)

Sr. No.	Educational Status	Chikhaldara	Dharani	Total
1	Illiterate	20 (20.00)	38 (38.00)	58 (29.00)
2	Primary School (1 st – 4 th)	26 (26.00)	16 (16.00)	42 (21.00)
3	Middle School (5 th – 7 th)	23 (23.00)	13 (13.00)	36 (18.00)
4	High School (8 th – 10 th)	20 (20.00)	18 (18.00)	38 (19.00)
5	Higher Secondary (11 th – 12 th)	10 (10.00)	12 (12.00)	22 (11.00)
6	Graduation and above	1 (1.00)	3 (3.00)	4 (2.00)
	Total	100 (100.00)	100 (100.00)	200 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentages to total)

It is observed from Table 3 that; the overall illiteracy percentage was 29.00 percent. Among the different tehsils

different percentage of illiteracy was observed, Illiteracy in Chikhaldara tehsil was 20.00 percent and in Dharani tehsil 38.00 percent. The percentage of primary school was the highest in Chikhaldara tehsil (26.00%) while in Dharani tehsil it was 16.00 percent. The percentage of middle school education was the highest in Chikhaldara tehsil (23.00%) followed by Dharani tehsil i.e. 13.00 percent. The overall percentage of high school education was 19.00 percent, While Chikhaldara tehsil show the highest percentage in high school education i.e. 20.00 percent followed by Dharani tehsil i.e. 18.00 percent. It is observed, majority of the population found to be below the 10th class (87%). Chikhaldara tehsil show 10.00 and Dharani tehsil show 12.00 percent of higher secondary school education. Only 4.00 percent families were educated up to graduation and above level education.

Land utilization pattern of selected tribals

Land utilization indicated the area of land actually utilize in different purpose like crop production etc. The details about land utilization by tribals are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Average land utilization pattern of selected tribal (Area:ha)

Sr. No.	Particulars	Chikhaldara	Dharani	Overall
1	Land holding	1.65 (52.88)	2.00 (59.35)	1.82 (56.17)
2	Current fallow	0.01 (0.32)	0.03 (0.89)	0.02 (0.62)
3	Net cultivated area	1.64 (52.56)	1.96 (58.33)	1.80 (55.56)
4	Area sown more than once	1.48 (47.44)	1.40 (41.67)	1.44 (44.44)
5	Gross cropped area	3.12 (100.00)	3.36 (100.00)	3.24 (100.00)
6	Cropping intensity (percent)	190.24	171.43	180

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentages to total)

It can be revealed from the Table 4 that, the total land holding held by tribals of Chikhaldara tehsil and Dharani tehsil were 1.65 hectares and 2.00 hectares, respectively and the overall average of land holding of the tribals from two tehsils were 1.82 hectares.

The average fallow land was 0.01 hectares (0.32%) in Chikhaldara tehsil, 0.03 hectares (0.89%) in Dharani tehsil and overall average fallow land was 0.02 hectares (0.62%). The net cultivated area in Chikhaldara tehsil was 1.64 hectares (52.56%) of the gross cropped area and in Dharani tehsil it was 1.96 hectares (58.33%) and the overall average net cultivated are was 1.80 hectares i.e. (55.56%) of the gross cropped area.

In case of Chikhaldara tehsil and Dharani tehsil area sown more than once was 1.48 hectares (47.44%), 1.40 hectares (41.67%) respectively and overall, average area sown more than once was worked out to 1.44 hectares (44.44%).

The gross cropped area for tribals of Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil was 3.12 hectares, 3.36 hectares respectively and overall, it was 3.24 hectares. The cropping intensity of tribals of Chikhaldara tehsil and Dharani tehsil was 190.24 percent and 171.43 percent, respectively and for overall, cropping intensity was 180 percent.

Cropping pattern of selected tribals

Cropping pattern of selected tribal is said to be the result of

past experience of farming, the type of soil available, irrigation sources and the pattern of distribution of rainfall in cultivation of different crops. The percentage area located to different crops with reference to gross cropped area by the selected tribals has been presented in Table 5.

Table 5 revealed that in kharif season percent share of Rice crop from chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil was 19.55 percent and 5.06 percent respectively. As Maize were one of the major crops cultivated which share 18.91 percent and 11.61 percent in the Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsils respectively. In Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil Soybean share 9.94 percent and 22.92 percent of land respectively. Tur was cultivated 2.88 and 10.12 percent of land in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsils respectively. Sorghum share very less amount of percentage in land i.e. 1.28 and 2.08 percent in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsils respectively. Cotton was only cultivated in Dharani tehsil which shares 6.55 percent of land. The overall percentage share of Rice, Maize, Soybean, Tur, Sorghum, Cotton were 12.04, 15.12, 16.67, 6.79, 1.54, 3.40 percent respectively.

In rabi season majorly cultivated crops were Gram and Wheat which share 23.40 percent and 23.72 percent respectively in the Chikhaldara tehsil while 21.43 percent and 10.42 percent in Dharani tehsil respectively. The overall average of the Gram and Wheat were 22.53 percent and 16.67 percent respectively.

In summer season two crops were taken in very small area i.e. Moong and Groundnut. Moong share 0.32 percent and 9.52 percent of total gross cropped area in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil, respectively. Overall percentage share of

Moong crop was 5.25 percent. It is observed that Groundnut crop was only cultivated by tribals from Dharani tehsil which share 0.24 percent to the gross cropped area.

Table 5: Cropping pattern of selected tribals (Area:ha)

Sr. No.	Particulars	Chikhaldara	Dharani	Overall
I	Kharif			
1	Rice	0.61 (19.55)	0.17 (5.06)	0.39 (12.04)
2	Maize	0.59 (18.91)	0.39 (11.61)	0.49 (15.12)
3	Soybean	0.31 (9.94)	0.77 (22.92)	0.54 (16.67)
4	Tur	0.09 (2.88)	0.34 (10.12)	0.22 (6.79)
5	Sorghum	0.04 (1.28)	0.07 (2.08)	0.05 (1.54)
6	Cotton	0.00 (0.00)	0.22 (6.55)	0.11 (3.40)
	Sub total	1.64 (52.56)	1.96 (58.33)	1.80 (55.56)
	Rabi			
1	Gram	0.73 (23.40)	0.72 (21.43)	0.73 (22.53)
2	Wheat	0.74 (23.72)	0.35 (10.42)	0.54 (16.67)
	Sub total	1.47 (47.12)	1.07 (31.85)	1.27 (39.20)
III	Summer			
1	Moong	0.01 (0.32)	0.32 (9.52)	0.17 (5.25)
2	Groundnut	0.00 (0.00)	0.008 (0.24)	0.004 (0.12)
	Sub total	0.01 (0.32)	0.33 (9.82)	0.17 (5.24)
	Gross Cropped Area	3.12 (100.00)	3.36 (100.00)	3.24 (100.00)

(Figures in parenthesis indicate the percentages to total)

Present status of livestock of selected tribals

The information regarding the average number of livestock

possessed by selected tribals and average values of livestock is presented in Table 6.

Table 6: Present status of livestock of selected tribals (Numbers per farmer)

Sr. No.	Particulars	Chikhaldara		Dharani		Overall	
		No.	Average value (Rs.)	No.	Average value (Rs.)	No.	Average value (Rs.)
1	Bullock	2 (20.00)	18395.00 (27.46)	2 (28.57)	12275.00 (22.04)	2 (25.00)	15335.00 (24.56)
2	Cow	1 (10.00)	14722.22 (21.97)	1 (14.29)	10648.65 (19.12)	1 (12.50)	13215.00 (21.17)
3	Buffalo	1 (10.00)	30666.67 (45.77)	1 (14.29)	28434.78 (51.06)	1 (12.50)	29750 (47.65)
4	Goat	2 (20.00)	2370.00 (3.54)	1 (14.29)	3688.03 (6.62)	1 (12.50)	3391.39 (5.43)
5	Poultry	4 (40.00)	845.50 (1.26)	2 (28.57)	624.00 (1.15)	3 (37.50)	744.67 (1.19)
	Total	10 (100.00)	66999.39 (100.00)	7 (100.00)	55689.46 (100.00)	8 (100.00)	62436.06 (100.00)

(Figures in parentheses indicate the percentages to total)

It is seen from the Table 6 that, average number of bullocks were 2 and 2 with average value of Rs. 18395.00 and Rs. 12275.00 in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil respectively. The average number of Cow reared by selected tribals was only 1 in both tehsils i.e. Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil

with average value of cow was Rs. 14722.22 and Rs. 10648.65, respectively. Tribals from both tehsils had only 1 average number of Buffalo with average value of Rs. 30666.67 and Rs. 28434.78 in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil respectively.

Average number of Goat in Chikhaldara rehsil were 2 and in Dharani tehsil there was only 1 goat with average value of Rs. 2370.00 and Rs. 3688.03 respectively. In Chikhaldara poultry birds were 4 and in Dharani poultry birds were 2 with average value of per poultry bird were Rs. 845.50 and Rs. 624.00, respectively.

Present status of assets of selected tribals

Present status of assets of tribal, possessed the information regarding the all categories of assets viz., building or house, farm machineries, farm implements, tools and etc. possessed by the selected tribal families.

Table 7: Present status of assets of selected tribals (Value:Rs.)

Sr. No.	Particulars	Chikhaldara		Dharani	
		Average No.	Average value	Average No.	Average Value
A	Farm building or house				
1	Well	1	30134.62	1	30888.89
	Sub total		30134.62		30888.89
B	Farm machineries				
1	Solar pump	1	11176.47	1	12423.08
2	Electric Pump	0	0.00	1	11952.38
3	Engine Pump	1	7192.31	0	0.00
4	Sprayer	1	3390.91	1	1783.33
5	Sprinkler	1	9829.27	1	5385.71
	Sub total		31588.96		31544.51
C	Farm Implements		-		-
D	Tools				
1	Ghamela	2	236.3	2	229.65
2	Axe	1	253.9	1	271
3	Sickle	2	106.9	3	95.6
4	Spade	1	252.4	1	272.5
5	Kudali	1	251.6	1	184.4
	Sub total		1101.1		1053.15
	Total		62824.67		63486.54

Assets of tribal were calculated and are presented in Table 7. It is observed that, the average construction value of well was Rs. 30134.62 and Rs. 30888.89 in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil respectively. The average value of asset which was used as farm machinery had purchase value Rs. 31588.96 and Rs. 31544.51 in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil. The average purchase value of assets used as farm tools was Rs.1101.10 and Rs. 1053.15 in chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil.

As tribals of Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil make their own implements like wooden plough, harrow, hoe, seed drill (Tifan) by using forest produce like wood, rope etc. The purchase values of farm implements were work out and valued at the prevailing prices of tools and other small implements.

Age of marriage selected tribals

The information about age of marriage of selected tribals and the average age at which tribals get married is presented in Table 8.

Table 8: Age of marriage and mortality ratio of selected tribals

(N=200)

Sr. No.	Particulars	Age of marriage of head of family (years)
1	Chikhaldara	19.96
2	Dharani	18.78
3	Overall	19.37

It is revealed from Table 8, average age of selected tribals was 19.96 years (Nearly 20 yrs) and 18.78 years in Chikhaldara and Dharani tehsil respectively. At the overall, average age of marriage of tribals was 19.37 years. This showed that tribals get married at early age.

Conclusion

The study concludes that the socio-economic characteristics of the tribal population are having a significant impact on their overall socio-economic status in the study area. The study further concludes that the aspects of size of family and level of education. In Melghat region, family composition of tribal farmers was seen mostly of joint families because among the tribal communities, traditional values and social ethics play an important role. Low standard of living, illiteracy and education up to primary level, low capital investment in productive asset was seen amongst the tribal families. The majority of the tribal farmers in Melghat region were marginal to small land holder had mostly the poor quality land and absence of poor quality facilities. The cropping pattern was predominant with food grain crops indicating subsistent agriculture. The tribal farmers were still using traditional methods for farming instead of using new modern techniques being followed by other farmers; the main reason would be lack of knowledge or awareness of new modern techniques of farming among tribal farmers.

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